Missing U.S. Plane May Be Down in Cuba

Associated Press

The State Department said yesterday that a private United Sates plane is missing from Florida but that it was not known whether this was the plane Cuba claims was shot down during a raid Friday.

The announcement was made after a Havana protest was delivered via the Czechoslovakian Embassy.

The Cuban Armed Forces Ministry claimed the plane dropped three bombs on a sugar mill near Caaibarien in Las Villas province before Cuban fighters and anti-aircraft fire downed it.

State Department Press Officer Joseph W. Reap said:

"The Department has been informed by the Federal Aviation Agency in Miami that a plane which left West Palm Beach at 7:30 a.m. (Friday) is missing.

"The plane which was leased from a rental company in Miami was piloted by a person named Louis Diaz Lopez.

"We do not know that this is the pane the Cubans claim to have shot down. Our investigation is continuing."

The missing plane was identified as a Cessna.

In Miami a Cuban exile leader expressed fear that it was "our plane" which had been downed. Orlando Bosch, of the revolutionary Insurrectional Recovery Movement, did not say from where the craft had taken off.

Havana said the plane was shot down at 11:45 a.m., more than four hours after the Cessna left Palm Beach. United States sources figured that such a flight should have taken only about two hours.

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